

VZCZCXYZ0003
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #2393/01 3271819
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 231819Z NOV 05
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7919
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 2415
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 2970
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 2784
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA 4339
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3106
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1499

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 002393

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CHILE: PART I - AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PREPARATIONS
FOR AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

REF: A. SECSTATE 209622

[1](#)B. SANTIAGO 01825

[1](#)1. Summary: This cable outlines preparations in Chile's agricultural sector. An evaluation of the Chilean public health sector preparations will be reported septel.

[1](#)2. Chile has experience with avian influenza (AI) issues due to a 2002 outbreak of the disease. The GOC demonstrated transparency and efficiency during the 2002 incident, and the entire poultry industry upgraded its biosafety measures. Post believes the Chilean agricultural sector is prepared to meet the current international challenge. End summary.

Preparedness/Communication

[1](#)3. The GOC does have a plan in place to prevent avian flu from becoming pandemic, and containing a pandemic if it occurs. Spanish-language information on this plan can be found on the Ministry of Agriculture's web page (www.sag.gob.cl/framearea.asp?cod=4). Embassy Santiago's Agricultural Attach and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) personnel agree that Chile is fully capable of implementing its domestic plan.

[1](#)4. As reported in reftel B, Chile has experience with this disease. In 2002, the first outbreak of AI in Chile led to the slaughter of \$15 million worth of birds from a single poultry producer. Chile successfully eradicated the disease within 6 months through a close collaboration between the public and private sectors. Chile immediately notified its trading partners, sought assistance from the UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), and quarantined itself for three months. Since then, it has systematically increased the level of sampling in both domestic and wild bird populations.

[1](#)5. The Chilean agricultural sector is critical to the country's thriving economy, and AI preparations have been an important priority for the Ministry of Agriculture. Minister of Agriculture Campos appointed Claudio Ternicier, International Trade Director, Livestock Protection Division, Agricultural Livestock Service (SAG) to be the Government of Chile's key point of contact for this issue.

[1](#)6. Chile is actively working with international partners on this issue, most notably with Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) members. Chile recently signed free trade agreements with a number of Asian countries (China, South

Korean, Singapore, Brunei and New Zealand) so it is conscious of how outbreaks in Asia could affect its own economy. On July 28, 2005, a Chilean delegation traveled to San Francisco to participate in an APEC AI Task Force. On October 24, 2005, Chile hosted an APEC training seminar for AI technical experts. Two U.S. experts attended this conference. Chile has also welcomed USG-sponsored training initiatives and SAG employees have participated in recent seminars in Iowa and Colorado.

¶7. Chile would welcome additional assistance from the U.S. In an August 2005 meeting with Ambassador Kelly, Minister Campos urged the USG to take the lead on this complex issue. Campos noted that, while Chile appears to be well prepared in terms of testing facilities and equipment, it would welcome additional scientific collaboration, as Chilean technical experts need assistance in following the very latest developments.

¶8. The GOC also indicated its willingness to provide training to others. As one of the countries with a successful track record on this issue, they have important "lessons learned" which could be shared with other countries.

Surveillance/Detection

¶9. The Chilean agricultural sector is capable of detecting a new strain of influenza among animals. Animal tests can be processed in 3 days by in-country labs. As mentioned, increased sampling since 2002 would improve rapid detection. From an animal health perspective, there are no major gaps in Chile's detection capabilities. Per reftel B, the GOC follows international protocols on this issue.

Response/Containment

¶10. Chile's poultry industry is vertically integrated, with three major companies dominating production, processing and sales. All three producers have taken AI seriously and have implemented rapid response mechanisms in close coordination with SAG. Government and industry worked together during the 2002 outbreak and the affected producer swiftly complied with orders to destroy \$15 million worth of his stock.

¶11. SAG operates quarantine facilities throughout Chile, as well as mobile labs which can be dispatched to "hot spots." These stations are well-stocked with personal protective gear, staffed by trained personnel and have proved effective in the past.

KELLY